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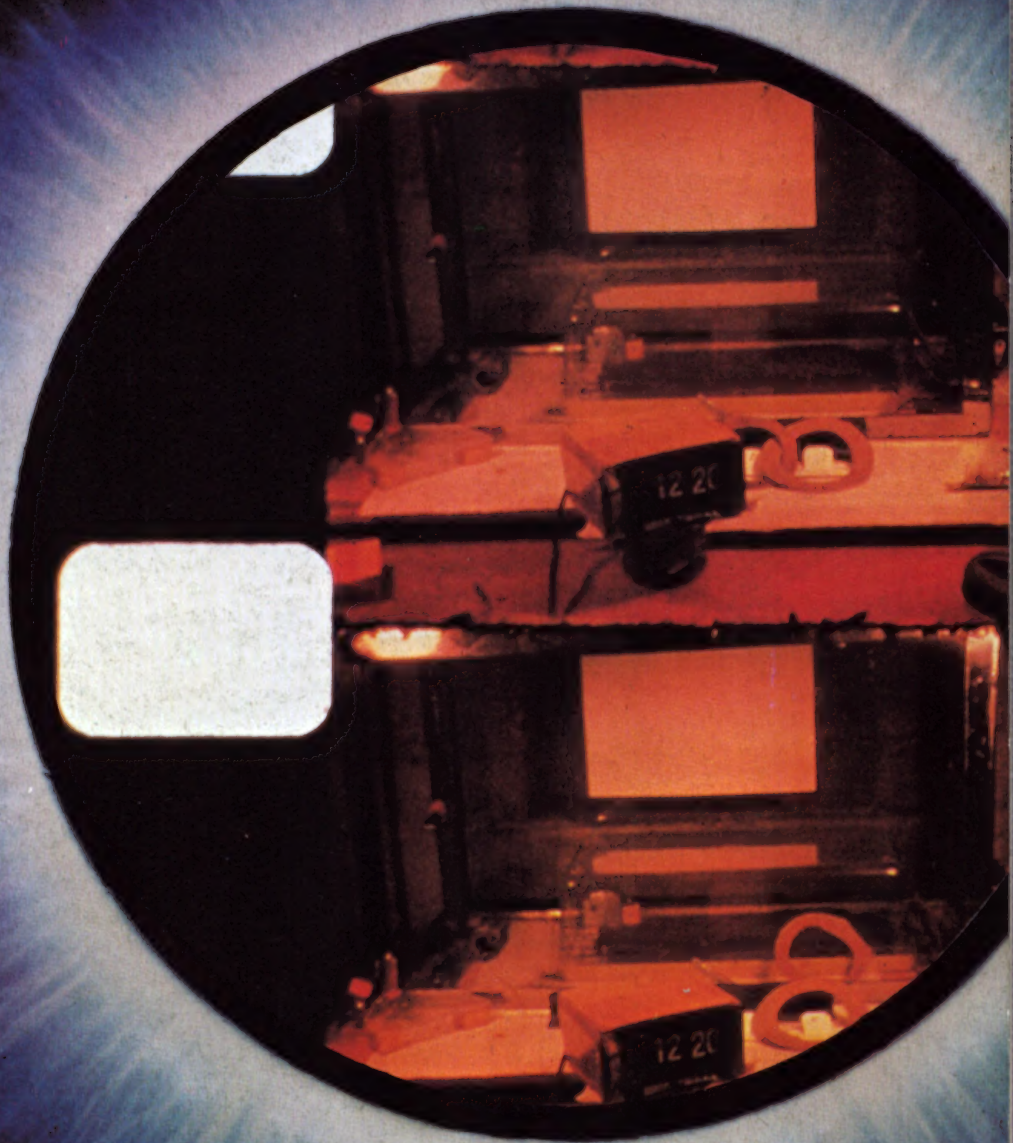
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THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

Star mystery
Inside the minilab
The green children
Soviet psi secrets
Mayfair ghosts

63



THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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In next week's issue

One of the most controversial mysteries in the annals of unexplained phenomena is that surrounding the so-called **Bermuda Triangle**. We tell the stories of the strange disappearances that have made the area notorious – and suggest what really happened. In **Soviet psi** we look at the frightening possibility that the USSR is developing a capacity for psychic warfare – and may already have launched a mind-bending offensive against the West. Earth may once have been visited by aliens – but how far can we trust the claims of writer Erich von Däniken on the subject? See the next part of **Ancient astronauts**. Why were the star-maps of the ancient Greeks 2000 years out of date? **Constellations** seeks the connection with the fall of Atlantis. And in **UFO Casebook** we take a look at UFOs and violence.

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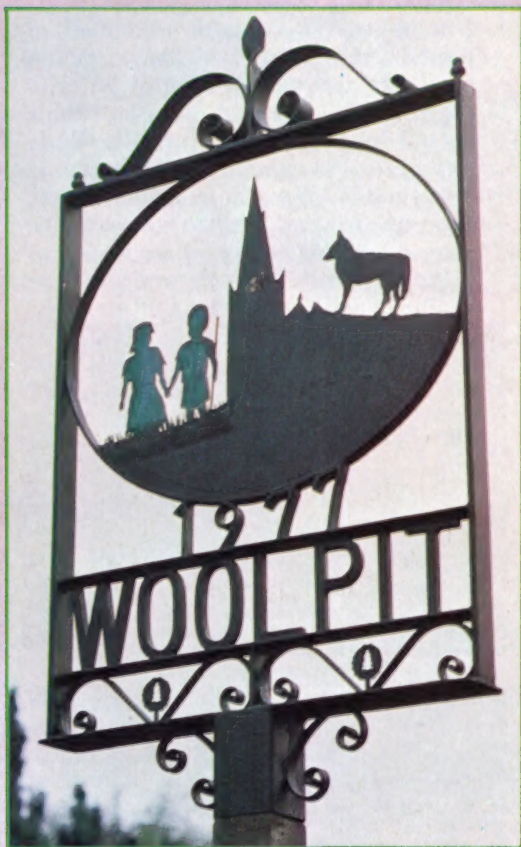
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Riddle of the green children

Thirteenth-century monastic records tell of the mysterious appearance, in the small Suffolk village of Woolpit, of two strange green-skinned children. GRAHAM FULLER and IAN KNIGHT investigate this weird case



The unexplained arrival of the two green children in the village of Woolpit (below) is commemorated in a village sign (left)

THE REIGN OF STEPHEN, last of the Norman kings, was a dark period in the history of England. Stephen, who seized power in 1154, was a weak and foolish ruler who diminished the monarchy's immediate power by a profligate policy of giving away titles, lands and royal rights to anyone prepared to support him, who fought a costly civil war, and who allowed the governmental machine to run down and his subjects to lose touch with the Crown. For the vast majority of ordinary people, it was a time of anxiety and strife. Life went on, of course, in the towns, manors, villages and fields; the land was tilled and the harvests gathered, but it was hard to make a living and the constant fear of war or invasion unsettled economic life. And, as often happens in times of hardship, the suffering, uncomplaining thousands clung with increasing desperation to the Church. As Dorothy Stenton remarks in her *English society in the early middle ages*, "Their lives . . . were hard and brief and they accepted unquestioningly a religion that offered to the poor and hungry an eternity of satisfaction."

If anything, this understates the case. Religion was the very crux of medieval life – and with the religion went a belief that the unworldly, the non-corporeal, existed as fact. What the eye could not see was every bit as real as the visible world; that spirits were invisible to human eyes was only an indication of Man's distance – through sin – from God. To some people was given the gift of seeing spirits; and at certain times these





incorporeal beings were apt to appear, either spontaneously or through invocation. For Saint Isidore of Seville (560–636), demons, for instance, were quite real. In his *Etymologia*, a work that was still widely known in the 12th century, he describes them as creatures that

unsettle the senses, stir low passions, disorder life, cause alarms in sleep, bring diseases . . . control the way lots are cast, make a pretence at oracles by their tricks, arouse the passion of love . . . when evoked they appear; they take on different forms, and sometimes appear in the likeness of angels.

A paranormal event would have been greeted quite differently in medieval times from today: it would have excited fear, awe, interest – but not *surprise*. And with this attitude went, unavoidably, what we would now regard as credulousness. Clearly, the veracity of any inexplicable occurrence of the

Above: the mysterious Sir Bertilak, the Green Knight of the 14th-century English poem *Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight*, meets his death. His green colour immediately suggests to the onlookers that he is a magical creature; similarly, the greenness of the Woolpit children serves to emphasise their magical quality

Right: a monk sees the devil of conceit behind a fashionable lady. Most medieval people regarded devils and spirits as real – something that should be taken into account when evaluating medieval reports of paranormal events

medieval period must be considered in the light of such a mentality – and with extreme caution.

The monastic chroniclers of the time understood this. Among them was William of Newburgh – a monastery in Yorkshire – who, looking back to Stephen's reign in 1200, began his account of the strange green children who materialised at Woolpit, near Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk, with the following words:

I must not there omit a marvel, a prodigy unheard of since the beginning of all time, which is known to have come to pass under King Stephen. I myself long hesitated to credit it, although it was noised abroad by many folk, and I thought it ridiculous to accept a thing which had no reason to commend it, or at most some reason of great obscurity, until I was so overwhelmed with the weight of so many and such credible witnesses that I was compelled to believe and admire that which my wit striveth vainly to reach or follow.

After this diffident preamble, the chronicler continues more confidently:

There is a village in England some four or five miles [7 or 8 kilometres] from the noble monastery of the Blessed King and Martyr Edmund, near which may be seen certain trenches of immemorial antiquity which are named in the English tongue, Wolfpittes, and which give their name to the adjacent village. One harvest-tide, when the harvesters were gathering in the corn, there crept out from these two pits a boy and a girl, green at every point of their body, and clad in garments of strange hue and unknown texture. These wandered distraught about the field, until the harvesters took them and brought them to the village, where



many flocked together to see this marvel.

Abbot Ralph of Coggeshall, a monastic scribe working in Essex, some 30 miles (50 kilometres) south of Woolpit, was less sceptical about the green children, but also less definite about the colour of their skin, claiming only that they were 'tinged of a green colour'. He continued:

No-one could understand their speech. When they were brought as curiosities to the house of a certain knight, Sir Richard de Calne, at Wikes, they wept bitterly. Bread and other victuals were set before them, but they would touch none of them, though they were tormented by great hunger, as the girl afterwards acknowledged. At length, when some beans just cut, with their stalks, were brought into the house, they made signs, with great avidity,



Above: fairies in the elf wood, in an illustration from *Fairyland* by Richard Doyle, published in 1875. These grossly sentimentalised creatures share one characteristic with their medieval counterparts: their use of the magical and slightly sinister colour green

Left: King Stephen, who seized the English throne in 1154. His reign was marked by civil war, and the economic life of the country suffered. In these conditions it was hardly surprising that unwanted children should be disowned by their families – but *green* children?



that they should be given to them. When they were brought, they opened the stalks instead of the pods, thinking the beans were in the hollow of them; but not finding them there, they began to weep anew. When those who were present saw this, they opened the pods, and showed them the naked beans. They fed on these with great delight, and for a long time tasted no other food. The boy, however, was always languid and depressed, and he died within a short time. The girl enjoyed continual good health; and becoming accustomed to various kinds of food, lost completely that green colour, and gradually recovered the sanguine habit of her entire body. She was afterwards regenerated by the laver of holy baptism, and lived for many years in the service of that knight (as I have frequently heard from him and his family), and

was rather loose and wanton in her conduct.

'Loose and wanton' or not, the girl apparently married and settled down with a man from Kings Lynn where, according to William of Newburgh, 'she was said to be still living a few years since.' She was often asked about the origins of herself and her companion, and how they arrived at Woolpit. The two monastic accounts differ at this point, though not substantially. Abbot Ralph records that they came from a country that was entirely green, inhabited by green people, and sunless but twilit. They had been tending their flocks one day when they came to a cave

on entering which they heard a delightful sound of bells; ravished by whose sweetness, they went for a long time wandering on through the cavern, until they came to its mouth. When they came out of it, they were struck senseless by the excessive light of the sun, and the unusual temperature of the air; and they thus lay for a long time. Being terrified by the noise of those who came on them, they wished to fly, but they could not find the entrance of the cavern before they were caught.

In William of Newburgh's account, on the other hand, the children are found in a cornfield, not a cave. The girl says.

We are folk of St Martin's land, for that is the chief saint among us. . . . One day we were feeding our father's flock in the field, when we heard a great noise, such as we hear now when all the bells of St Edmund's peal together. When, therefore, we were listening with all our ears to this marvellous sound, suddenly we were rapt in the spirit and found ourselves in your harvest field.

She adds that theirs was a Christian land with churches of its own, a land separated from a land of light by what she called a

An evergreen story

Below: an illustration of the 'green children of Banjos'. Despite the fact that the Banjos story is now known to be a thinly disguised version of the case of the Green Children of Woolpit, it continues to be published as a true account

An interesting postscript to the Woolpit tale is the story of the green children of Banjos, a tiny village in the Spanish province of Catalonia.

The story goes that in August 1887, some peasants found two strange children crying at the mouth of a cave. The young boy and girl spoke in a tongue incomprehensible to the villagers – and, it was claimed, specialists called in from Barcelona failed to recognise it. They were clad in clothes made from an unknown material – but, strangest of all, their skins were bright green, a colour that was clearly due to natural pigmentation.

The children seemed terrified, so the mayor of the village took them home to comfort them. He offered them food, but they refused every dish and for five days they starved, drinking only spring water. Then they spotted a basket of raw green beans and ended their fast. From then on, they lived on green beans and water; but the boy had been gravely weakened by lack of food, and died within a month.

His sister, on the other hand, thrived and began to learn Spanish. Eventually she could speak well enough to be able to describe the place she had come from. It

was a land of eternal twilight where the Sun never shone; its natural boundary was a large river across which could be seen another land bathed in sunshine. Life in their twilight country was pastoral and peaceful, until one day when a great noise deafened the children, and they found themselves transported to sun-drenched Banjos.

On hearing this, the intrigued villagers searched for an entrance to this hidden world, but without success. The girl reconciled herself to her new life. Her skin gradually lost its green hue, and she died peacefully five years later, taking with her the secret of her origin.

The story sounds strangely familiar. In fact, the resemblance to the story of the green children of Woolpit at first sounds *uncannily* close: the only differences lie in that the Banjos children are described as having 'almond-shaped, Asiatic eyes', and that the girl dies after five years. But when we learn that the name of the mayor who looked after the children is Ricardo de Calno, credulousness is stretched beyond its limits – remember Sir Richard de Calne of Woolpit? The resemblance is too close for comfort. Unless there is some extraordinary Fortean coincidence at work, it can safely be assumed that the green children of Banjos are a complete fabrication.

But how did the Banjos story ever come to be accepted as true? Until the 1950s, the Woolpit tale was little known, but in 1959 Harold T. Wilkins – who was responsible for the publication of the alleged Kidd–Palmer map showing buried treasure on Oak Island, Canada (see page 947) – included the story in his popular book *Mysteries solved and unsolved*. It was Wilkins who first suggested that these children might have come from a 'fourth dimensional world [that] existed side-by-side with ours'. He also felt that the story could 'imply that they had been teleported from some world in space . . . where men live under ground'.

Wilkins's extravagant views encouraged an unscrupulous author – as yet unidentified – to update and relocate the story. An imaginary village in a remote part of Catalonia was invented – there is no such place as Banjos – making checks difficult for anyone who knew nothing of the tale's ancestry. And so the tale came to be accepted as fact, even though no one has ever produced testimony of any kind for the story – despite John Macklin's claim that 'the documents concerning the case exist, together with all the evidence given under oath by witnesses who saw and touched and questioned the children.'



wide stream – presumably a sea.

That two alien, mysterious children turned up somewhere near Woolpit and were discovered there by the local villagers seems fairly credible. Times were hard, and it is not difficult to imagine that a family, too large, and unable to provide for all, might choose to offload two of its younger members. In those impoverished times it happened frequently. It happens today.

But it is the children's greenness and the other 'facts' of the case that make this such an extraordinary incident – and at the same time call upon a number of medieval superstitions and beliefs that cast considerable doubt upon the entire story.

The reports claim that the children were green, or green-tinged. No other colour has such supernatural significance. In folklore, it has a curious dual significance: it is the colour



Above: a greetings card of around 1870, showing the ancient custom of the dance of Jack-in-the-Green on May Day. His leafy green costume represented the return of life to nature in spring



Left: a pub sign showing the Green Man, an enigmatic figure who characterises the forces of nature, sometimes benevolent, sometimes seemingly malicious to Man

of life and fecundity, but also a magical and slightly sinister colour, often associated with fairies. The most famous example of the association the colour green had in medieval times is the 14th-century anonymous poem *Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight*. The weird hue of the Green Knight – who turns out, as his colour would suggest, to be a strangely ambivalent character, neither good nor evil – immediately identifies him with the world of faerie. In Brian Stone's translation from the Middle English, the description of the Green Knight runs as follows:

The assembled folk stared, long
scanning the fellow
For all men marvelled what it might
mean,
That a horseman and his horse
should have such a colour
As to grow green as grass and
greener yet, it seemed,

More gaudily glowing than green
enamel on gold.

Those standing studied him and
sidled towards him

With all the world's wonder as to
what he would do.

For astonishing sights they had seen,
but such a one never;

Therefore a phantom from Fairyland
the folk there deemed him.

There is also, of course, the 'green man' of mythology, a supernatural being who lives on in English folk dance and pub names.

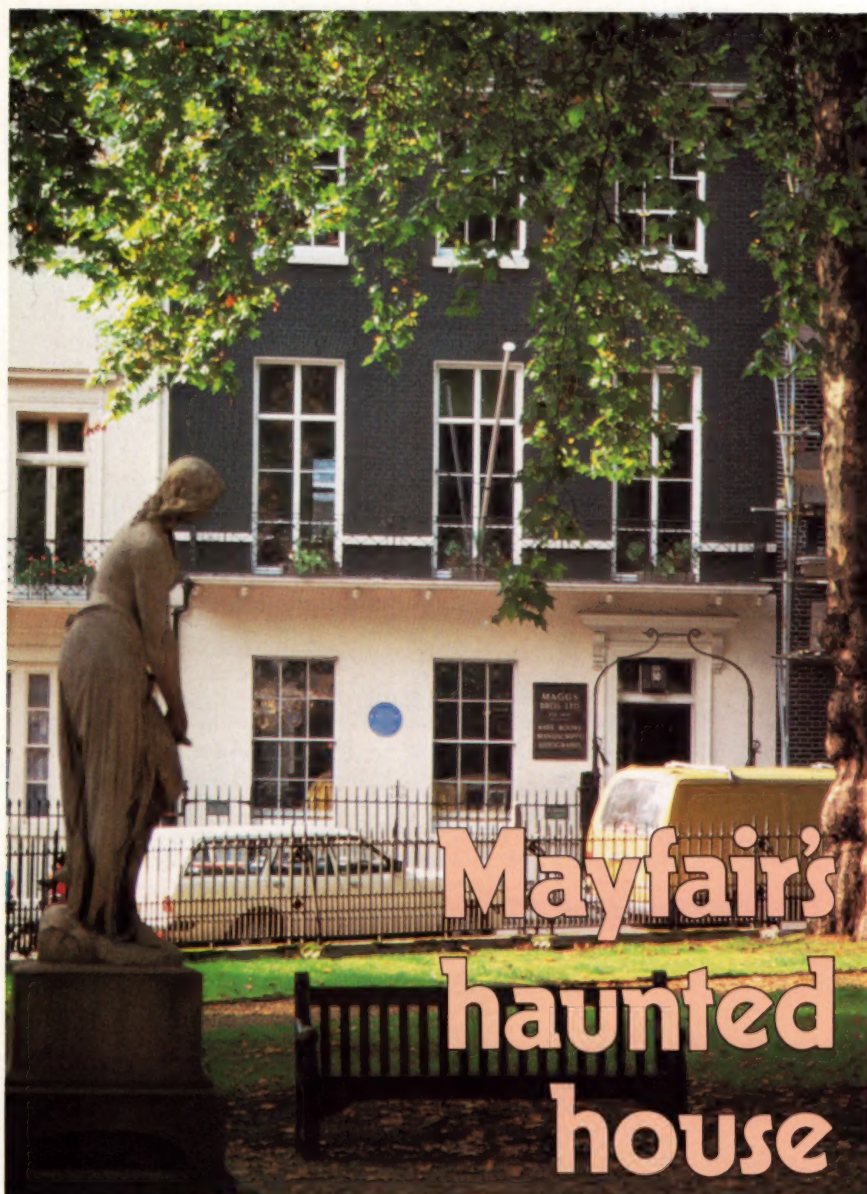
If Woolpit's two foundlings were green, it is likely that they would have been regarded as in some way supernatural by the villagers. But what if someone who was present at their sudden appearance decided that they were, in any case, supernatural: how long would it be before their colour became part of the legend, the 'fact' evolving from the rumour? This is a contrived theory, but not a difficult one to swallow.

Further evidence to support this argument is provided by the Woolpit children's predilection for green beans. Traditionally, beans are the food of the dead, and of ghosts, and the souls of the dead are said to dwell in bean fields. But beans have good properties too – scattered round the house, they are said to ward off evil spirits; and in witch country, a bean was to be kept in the mouth to be spat at the first witch one encountered. The detail of the two children eating nothing but beans merely compounds the notion that they were other-worldly; there is more than a hint here that someone has included this detail for emphasis, that it is not intended to be taken literally.

What is most likely is that two foreign children had been abandoned by their nomadic parents, and were found in a state of near exhaustion and starvation. Their greenness could have been some form of jaundice or secondary anaemia. Perhaps they were just green with queasiness – the effect of eating too many green beans?

Further reading

K. Briggs, *A dictionary of British folklore*, Routledge and Kegan Paul 1971
K. Briggs, *A dictionary of fairies*, Allen Lane 1976
E. Porter, *The folklore of East Anglia*, Batsford 1974



For decades the elegant house in the heart of London's West End was plagued by ghosts, but each haunting seemed to take a new and different form. FRANK SMYTH tells the story – and offers some explanations

IN 1884 the *National Observer* magazine published a poem by Rudyard Kipling. Entitled *Tomlinson*, it told the story of a London society 'waster' whose soul was rejected by the Devil on the grounds of mediocrity. But it was the setting of the poem that was calculated to interest the general public. It began:

Now Tomlinson gave up the ghost in
his house in Berkeley Square,
And a spirit came to his bedside and
gripped him by the hair . . .

For the previous four decades, Berkeley Square had been synonymous with ghosts (as it was with nightingales 60 years later).

According to popular rumour the focus of the trouble was No 50, a four-storey town house of brick and stone, built in the mid 18th century. For some years it had been the

Above: 50 Berkeley Square as it appears today

Right: the front door, from behind which startled neighbours heard curious thumps, bumps and the ringing of bells

London home of Prime Minister George Canning (1770–1827), but it seemed unlikely that the supernatural disturbances in the house had any connection with his restless spirit. Canning was not particularly ethereal in life and in any case had breathed his last at Chiswick, some miles away.

The general consensus of opinion was that the 'thing' that haunted No 50 was 'too horrible to describe' – it seemed to be more a demon or terrible elemental than an ordinary ghost. Even before Bulwer Lytton used the house as a setting for his famous ghost story *The hunters and the haunted*, stories abounded of a 'nameless, slimy thing' that slithered up and down the stairs, leaving a foul-smelling, snail-like trail in its wake.

One tale, not unlike Bulwer Lytton's, told of two sailors who had broken into the empty house to shelter for the night. On the morrow, one was found dead, impaled on the railings in the street below, having leapt from the top storey in a frenzy of fear, while his companion was discovered white-haired and mad in the house itself.

No matter that no documentary evidence for such a remarkable incident existed. The story was firmly believed by society dandies and East End costermongers alike, and for several decades was kept alive by poems, newspapers and music hall songs.

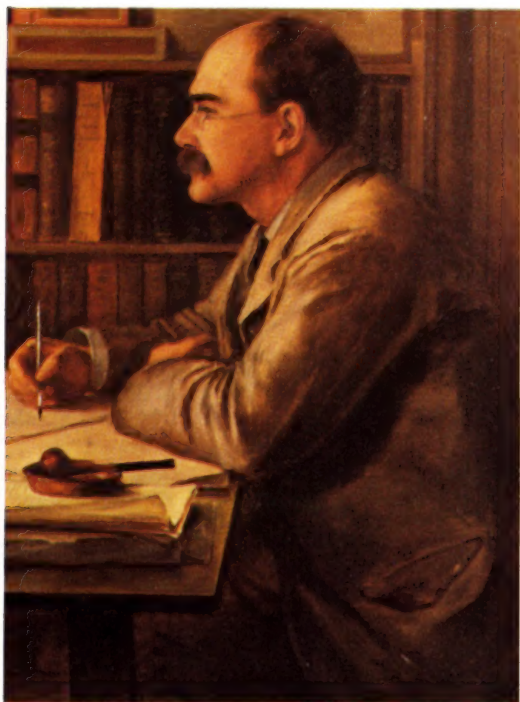
Charles Harper, writing in 1907, remarked that 'the famous "haunted house" in Berkeley Square was long one of those things that no country cousin coming up from the provinces to London on sightseeing bent ever willingly missed.'

Harry Price investigated the mystery in the 1920s, two decades before his mishandling – or worse – of the Borley Rectory case made him an object of suspicion in psychical research circles. In the Berkeley Square investigation he seems to have done a



reasonably objective job: without, however, reaching any firm conclusions. On the one hand, he said, he had discovered some evidence that in the late 18th century – presumably before Prime Minister Canning's tenancy – the house had been the headquarters of a gang of forgers and coin clippers, who actively encouraged tales of the supernatural in order to disguise the true nature of the 'bumps in the night' that neighbours heard from time to time.

On the other hand he pointed out that the house had been empty for remarkably long periods and, while empty houses often tend to father ghost stories around themselves, 50 Berkeley Square was one of the most desirable addresses in London – so why had



Left: Rudyard Kipling, from a portrait by Burne-Jones. Kipling's poem *Tomlinson* exploited the notoriety of the house in Berkeley Square – and helped sell out the magazine in which it appeared

it been deserted for so long? Perhaps the rumours had some truth after all?

Price's final surmise was that No 50 may well have been a target for poltergeist activity. In 1840, he discovered that several of the neighbours had heard a variety of noises coming from the empty premises, including bumps on the stairs, dragging noises as if heavy furniture were being moved about, tramping footsteps and, fairly regularly, the jangling of the signal bells below stairs.

One of the more headstrong neighbours, weary of the commotion, obtained a key and, as soon as he heard the bells tinkling, dashed into the house and down to the kitchen. He found the bells still bouncing on their curled springs, but no other sign of life in the locked house. All this, pointed out Price, fitted exactly with the type of phenomenon described by the Society for Psychical Research as poltergeist activity: the one difference being that poltergeists – in practically all known cases – centre themselves on people.

In the course of his investigation Price had

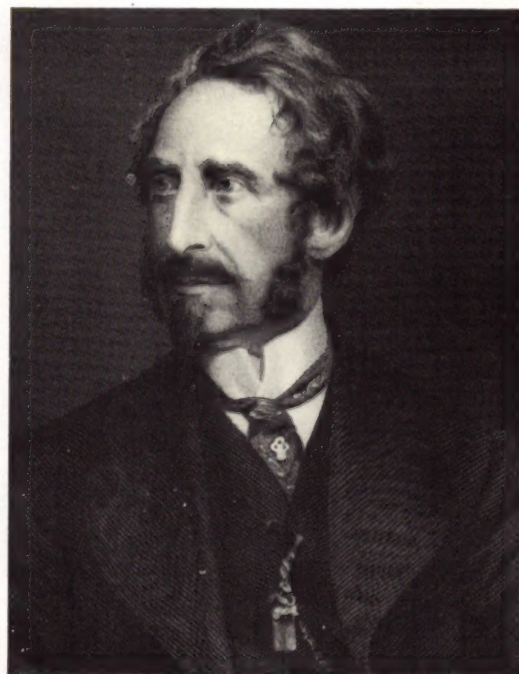
had to wade through a great deal of speculative data that rarely gave dates or names. For instance, in the 1870s the magazine *Notes and Queries* had launched an investigation into the case, culminating in a long series by the writer W. E. Howlett.

The mystery of Berkeley Square still remains a mystery [he wrote]. We are in hopes that during the last fortnight a full, final, and satisfactory answer would have been given to our questions: but we have been disappointed. The story of the haunted house in the heart of Mayfair can be recapitulated in a few words. . . . The house in Berkeley Square contains at least one room of which the atmosphere is supernaturally fatal to body and mind. A girl saw, heard, or felt such horror in it that she went mad, and never recovered sanity enough to tell how or why.

A gentleman, a disbeliever in ghosts, dared to sleep in it and was found a corpse in the middle of the floor after frantically ringing for help in vain. Rumour suggests other cases of the same kind, all ending in death, madness or both as a result of sleeping, or trying to sleep in that room. The very party walls of the house, when touched, are found saturated with electric horror. It is uninhabited save by an elderly man and his wife who act as caretakers; but even these have no access to *the* room. This is kept locked, the key being in the hands of a mysterious and seemingly nameless person who comes to the house once every six months, locks up the elderly couple in the basement, and then unlocks *the* room and occupies himself in it for hours.

In 1881, an anonymous writer, again in *Notes and Queries*, testified to the truth of the

Right: Edward Bulwer Lytton, who used 50 Berkeley Square as a setting for a gruesome short story



Great hauntings

'electric party walls' story, though he too failed to name names, possibly because the witnesses were 'society people'.

The incident in question had taken place at a ball given in 49 Berkeley Square early in the season of 1880. 'A lady and her partner,' said the writer, 'were sitting against the party wall of number fifty when on a sudden she moved from her place and looked around. The gentleman was just going to ask the reason when he felt impelled to do the same. On comparing their impressions, both had felt very cold and had fancied that someone was looking over their shoulders from the wall behind! From this it would appear that "stone walls do not a prison make" for these uncomfortable ghosts, who can project themselves right through them to the great discomfort of the next door neighbours.'

The most likely explanation of the origins of No 50's sinister reputation was printed shortly after this account appeared, and differed from most in that it could be verified, at least in part: doubtless because the parties mentioned were dead. According to the writer, in *Pall Mall* magazine, the house had been bought after George Canning's death by an Hon. Miss Curzon, who lived there from time to time until her death in 1859 at the age of 90. It was then leased by her executors to a Mr Myers, a well-to-do man about town who was engaged to be married and who spent the next few months of his tenancy redecorating and furnishing, only to have his bride jilt him on the eve of

her wedding day. The unfortunate Myers became a recluse in his new home, developing a curiously Dickensian character, part Scrooge, part Miss Havesham.

In 1873 he was prosecuted by Westminster council for non-payment of rates, and refused to answer the summons in person. Despite this, the magistrate gave him time to pay, and was surprisingly lenient with him in his summing up: 'The house in question is known as "the haunted house" and has occasioned a good deal of speculation among the neighbours. Mr Myers' failure to pay his rates had arisen from eccentricity.'

The *Pall Mall* author went on: 'The disappointment [of his rejection] is said to have broken his heart and turned his brain. He became morose and solitary, and would never allow a woman to come near him. The miserable man locked himself away in the ill-fated top room of the house, only opening the door for meals to be brought to him occasionally by a manservant. Generally speaking he slept during the day and, at night, would emerge from his self-imposed exile to wander, candle in hand, around the house that was to have been the scene of his happiness.'

Possibly Myers was the 'mysterious and nameless person' alluded to by W. E. Howlett, for he died, apparently, towards the end of the 1870s.

'Thus,' said the writer in *Pall Mall*, 'upon the melancholy wanderings of this poor lunatic, was founded that story of the

Below: Berkeley Square in the 1860s. The macabre goings-on at No 50 sorted ill with its gentility and refinement



ghost . . . those whom so many persons insist on calling "mad doctors" could tell of hundreds of cases of minds diseased and conduct similar to that of poor Myers. His sister was, it was said, his only relative, and she was too old or great an invalid to interfere.'

New twists to the tale

There the story should have ended, but did not. In 1912, Jessie A. Middleton, a popular author on the occult, wrote in her *Grey ghost book* that her own research had shown that the ghost was that of a little girl in a Scots kilt. She claimed that the child had been either frightened or starved to death in the fourth-floor room and had been seen there from time to time ever since, weeping and wringing her hands in dismay. But Miss Middleton added that another version of the story – echoing the 'falling sailor' tale – held that the girl had not been so young, that her name was Adeline, and that rather than submit to a 'fate worse than death' at the hands of her wicked guardian, she had leapt from the window and been spiked to death on the area railings.

As late as 1969 another strand was added to the already tangled skein of the Berkeley Square affair. Mrs Mary Balfour, an octogenarian lady of noble Scottish family, whose letters from society names attested to her apparently remarkable powers of clairvoyance, told a reporter of the only actual ghost that she had seen. Early in 1937 she had moved with her maid into a flat in Charles Street, which is adjacent to Berkeley Square, having lived previously in the Highlands of Scotland.

'It was about the time of New Year,' she recalled, 'and I had come in late when my maid summoned me to the kitchen at the



Above: reputedly the seat of all the disturbances – the haunted room at No 50, now quiet and tranquil as part of a modern office



Left: George Canning, sometime Prime Minister, who owned – but apparently did not return to haunt – the house in Berkeley Square

back of the flat. We could see into the back windows of a house diagonally opposite and in one of them stood a man in a silver-coloured coat and breeches of eighteenth-century cut, wearing a periwig and with a drawn, pale face. He was looking out sadly, not moving. I thought perhaps that he had been to some New Year party in fancy dress, and either had a hangover or some personal trouble, I rebuked the girl for staring at him so. It was only afterwards that I discovered that the house was number fifty. Believe it or not, I had not until that time heard of the reputation of the house.'

If Mrs Balfour had not, many people had, and stories about No 50 Berkeley Square continue to circulate even today. In the early years of the Second World War the house was taken over by antiquarian book sellers Maggs Brothers Ltd. According to a spokesman, in late 1981 they were still getting three or four calls a month from tourists seeking the ghosts: 'Unfortunately we can tell them nothing. The so-called "haunted room" is next to the accounts department; none of us has ever seen, or heard, or felt anything out of the ordinary there. During the war members of the staff used the room as a dormitory while firewatching without any discomfort apart from draughts. I can only regretfully suppose that the ghost was exorcised long before our arrival.'



A pen levitates and writes by itself, leather rings link and unlink, and strange poems suddenly appear – these are only some of the psychokinetic effects in the SORRAT group's minilab. JULIAN ISAACS traces the development of this exciting experiment

THE SORRAT GROUP'S outstanding success in inducing psychokinesis (PK) led parapsychologist William E. Cox to install a minilab at their headquarters at Skyrim Farm, Missouri, USA, in the summer of 1977. The first successful minilab consisted of a perspex box of about one cubic foot (0.03 cubic metres) volume, which was secured to a stout wooden base by steel strips and two padlocks. Cox put various 'toys' inside it for the PK agency to play with. Several minor PK effects happened while the box was at Skyrim Farm, the most outstanding of which was the apparently paranormal arrival of pieces of old Indian beaded leather inside the securely



Cox and box

locked and sealed perspex minilab.

The first minilab was then transferred to the home of Dr J. T. Richards in Rolla, Missouri, where Cox also lived. Dr Richards had the double distinction of being both SORRAT's historian and a focus for considerable PK activity, especially paranormal rapping – although he chose to explain it as the work of spirits, rather than of his own subconscious. Various types of PK phenomena took place in the first minilab, and perhaps the most intriguing happened when Cox was present. On this occasion the minilab contained clean paper, a pencil, dried peas dyed white and blue, a small glass, leather rings firmly attached to a point inside the box, a set of six spools strung on a wire with twisted ends, and miscellaneous other small objects.

Several friends of Dr Richards who were interested in psychic matters had met at his house and gathered around the minilab, which was on a coffee table in the sitting room. They turned out the light and waited. Suddenly they heard noises from inside the box; PK activity was taking place. Cox was telephoned and he arrived at the farm in time to hear what he construed as the dried peas jumping about inside the minilab. Then there was silence and the light was turned on again. On investigation, the group discovered that the locks were still secure, but some surprising changes had taken place inside the box. One of the six spools was missing and the ring of wire on which they had been strung had had its ends re-twisted differently. Thirty blue peas had apparently

Above: the locked and sealed minilab in the basement of Dr J. T. Richards's home in Rolla, Missouri. A die has moved – apparently of its own volition – leaving a white trail where it has ploughed through a layer of coffee grounds on the floor of the minilab, exposing the white wood beneath. An unidentified white object has also levitated above the raised tin in the centre

Left: consecutive frames from one of the Rolla 'home movies' showing the paranormal linking of two seamless leather rings outside the minilab

Far right: a white envelope moves smoothly out of its outer envelope – which remains sealed



Below: W. E. Cox with some metal objects that bent while secured in the minilab. The aluminium bar, which is $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (1.2 centimetres) thick, was bent 11°. The round white object is what remained of a plastic thermometer after it partially melted while in the minilab. The spoon bent after being sealed in the minilab by a locksmith – who swore that the lock remained secure



therefore fraudulent. But reports of telekinesis and teleportation have a long history and have persistently cropped up in the literature of psychical research; for example there are accounts of well-witnessed teleportation in Professor John Hasted's *Metal-benders* (1981). Viewed from an historical perspective Cox's results are by no means unique, although the fact that they are recorded on film adds to their significance.

Cox's second and third minilabs were set up in a small room in the basement of Dr Richards's home in Rolla. They were fish tanks turned upside down onto a thick wooden board. They differed only in that the third was larger than the second and in minor details regarding the position of the locks. A strip of steel was wrapped tightly round each minilab, then passed through two slits in the baseboard and under the base. The ends of the band were secured together by a high-quality padlock. The minilabs were then locked onto their baseboards and the narrow slit between each tank and its board was sealed with a rubber gasket; this effectively



Above: this sealed bottle acted as a kind of 'minilab'. Various objects were placed in it: a couple of pipecleaners, a pencil stub, a piece of paper and a safety pin. Acted upon by PK the pipecleaners became the 'man' who wrote 'Freedom, love, faith' on the paper with the pencil stub

jumped into the glass, two straight pipecleaners were now twisted into linked rings and the leather rings had been dislodged.

Shortly before this, Cox met a Mr S.C. who rapidly became a valued collaborator; he suggested and helped to set up ciné camera facilities so that any PK inside the second and third minilabs could be filmed while it was happening. Target objects for PK action were linked to special switches so that whenever an object moved the switch was triggered. The switches were wired to a timing device that in turn automatically switched on two lights and triggered a ciné camera to shoot a 30-second sequence of film showing whatever was happening inside the locked minilab. A 12-hour clock was also set in front of the camera so the timing of any PK activity would be shown (the later British minilabs use 24-hour clocks that also show the date, thus pinpointing the events precisely). This is how all later film of PK activity in minilabs has been shot. Cox's first set-up was crude – the ciné camera was clockwork so it sometimes ran down, the lights were not very powerful so that definition was poor and the standard 8-millimetre film added to the problems of obtaining good quality pictures. The timer was also triggered falsely on several occasions.

Sceptics will, in view of the extraordinary nature of the events filmed at Rolla, simply write off all minilab PK as 'impossible' and



stopped anyone being able to slip anything through the gap. To improve security further, Cox used some special plastic string, obtainable only from Germany, which he tied tightly round the ends of the steel strip; the ends of the string were then melted together and bound with adhesive tape. Lastly, Cox impressed the insignia of his notary's ring into the melted plastic while it was still warm. Cox had sole charge of the two keys to each padlock and had complete control over how the objects were set up inside the minilabs.

So if one wanted to assume that the minilab PK events were fraudulent two questions would have to be asked: who is doing the cheating – and how? Given Cox's background of more than 30 years' PK research and a few years' successful work with minilabs it seems most unlikely that he would have failed to detect any fraud perpetrated by others in the group. Cox's record also speaks powerfully against his being in collusion with others; in 30 years in J.B. Rhine's laboratory there was never an occasion to doubt his honesty and integrity.

A box of tricks?

Shifting their ground, sceptics might then point out that the objects inside the minilabs could easily be manipulated with fine threads, but judging by the evidence of all film shot at Rolla it becomes obvious that the activity in the minilabs was far too complex and co-ordinated to be produced in that way. Another accusation is that the films were animated. Animation would involve taking a series of single frame shots of the minilab and its contents, the objects being moved very small distances between each shot – so that when the film is shown at the normal speed of 18 frames per second the objects appear to be moving on their own and continuously. This would be an enormously time-consuming task and a dummy minilab would have to be set up secretly to avoid detection, for the real minilab is frequently visited and is in a busy domestic environment. Of course it is possible to maintain the fraud hypothesis by assuming that everybody concerned was in collusion, or that Cox and Richards have a secret film studio somewhere. But once other groups of researchers start to reproduce the Rolla results the fraud hypothesis will become increasingly less tenable.

The first filmed events were obtained in May 1979 and showed a levitating pen. Shortly afterwards further sequences were filmed of this pen engaged in 'direct writing' inside the locked and sealed minilab. Among the words written the name 'John King' was prominent – King being the control claimed by several mediums, notably Eusapia Palladino (see page 374), and 'he' figures as one of the group of ostensible spirits associated with minilab experiments. On 4 July 1979 a pen was filmed writing the words 'Glorious Fourth' on some paper outside of, and in

Part One (abbreviated) of a 1,900-word
Notarized Deposition from Mr. R. Henson
of Abel Lock & Key, Rolla, Missouri:

County of Phelps
City of Rolla, Mo.

I have been asked to examine an aquarium tank by Mr. W. E. Cox of this city, and the security of its attachment to a solid wooden base...

...I have inserted my own lock into the hosp, and have permanently plugged it... If serious alterations of the objects in it later occur, I am quite willing to testify to it in the presence of a public notary, since I do not believe this is in fact possible without first destroying my lock. Its keyway I chose also to seal with superglue and then tape.

Signed: *Ronnie Henson* Witnessed: *W. E. Cox* 5/8/81

Part Two (abbreviated):

At my shop on May 12, 1981, Mr. Cox brought to me the same container... I could not find any evidence that the plugged and permanently-glued Master Lock had been opened, nor had the sealed paper cover over the keyway (bearing my imprint) been punctured or torn...

...We could see that various changes had now occurred inside... I certainly cannot understand how these things have taken place...

Signed: *Ronnie Henson*
ABEL LOCK & KEY
117 So. Bishop Ave.
Rolla, Mo. 65401

Witnessed: *Mary Dillingham*
(W. E. Cox)

Lena Biddle, a Notary Public, do certify that Mr. Ronnie Henson and Mr. W. E. Cox appeared before me on May 14, 1981, and that Mr. Henson has declared that both Part One and Part Two of this document to which my signature is affixed is true and correct in every particular.

5/14/81 *Lena Biddle*
my com. exp. 6-1-85

front of, the minilab. As with much of the direct writing, the motion of the pen was extraordinarily rapid – Cox estimates a writing speed of more than double his own. A slower example of PK from this early period is that of an aluminium film canister 'walking' inside the locked minilab. It can be seen slowly edging its way across the width of the tank, stumbling a little over a minor obstruction near the middle.

It was in May 1979 that Cox unexpectedly obtained hard evidence of teleportation connected with the minilab. On the floor of the basement he found a green felt-tipped pen that he knew he had safely locked inside the minilab the night before.

Comings and goings

The tally of teleportation events is now a long one. Pipecleaners, water, matchbooks, peas, pens, delicate mica sheets, string, small toys, jewellery, film, metal objects, and paper have all passed into or out of minilabs.

A classic experiment in this area is the paranormal linking of two rings. Cox has obtained more than six of these events on film, the first in the summer of 1979. The film clearly reveals that the rings are indeed interlinked – but only for a brief period before they separate again. The actual interlinkage happens between frames so no pictures exist of the 'halfway' situation. Irritatingly, the rings (made of several grades of

Above: the abbreviated form of a deposition signed by a Rolla locksmith who declared that the lock he fitted to 'an aquarium tank... with a solid wooden base' (the minilab) was not tampered with in any way, yet 'various changes have occurred inside' and he 'certainly cannot see how these things have taken place'. However, security was only gradually imposed after PK was achieved reasonably frequently; an experiment that is over-secure in the early stages often has the effect of discouraging PK completely

leather) have always unlinked again so that no permanent linkages have been left as evidence. In their written messages to the alleged spirits co-operating in the minilab research Cox and Richards have laid much stress on the importance of permanent linkages. Amusingly, one of the 'spirits' replied: 'We've tried, but we can't make the damn leather rings stay linked – sorry. John King.'

The variety and frequency of minilab PK have continued to grow, and later events filmed in the locked and sealed minilab have included the sorting of dyed peas into single-colour groups, the sorting of cards into suits and the blowing up of balloons. Paranormal metal bending has taken place inside the minilabs; spontaneous combustion has also occurred, and the variety of telekinetic actions recorded is extremely wide.

The freedom with which material objects have apparently passed through the minilab walls has led the Rolla group to use it as a paranormal 'postbox'. The disappearance of letters has been filmed and a few days later these letters have been delivered through the normal postal service. As this 'PK post' practice grew, the envelopes were left open in the minilab and a motley selection of objects surrounding them would be telekinetically popped inside before the letters were teleported. It was noticed very often that foreign stamps would somehow find their way on to the envelopes so that the letters would arrive bearing dated Australian, Italian or South



Many of the classic phenomena repeatedly described in the literature of psychical research have also been reported as happening in the minilab. These include the abrupt and mysterious appearance (an 'apport' in Spiritualist terms) of a piece of typing and direct writing (left); the swift levitation of two leather rings (above) and the spontaneous combustion of a piece of paper on the floor of the box (above right). On another occasion the glass at the top right hand side of the minilab cracked – when a candle inside spontaneously ignited. If these and other reported examples of minilab PK are authentic then they represent a breakthrough in PK experimentation

American stamps. The PK takes the path of least resistance since the postmarks invariably read 'Rolla' and the letters seem to spend little time between disappearing from the minilab and arriving at the Rolla sorting office. In the UK Dr John Beloff and the author have received several of these letters.

One of the exciting potentialities of minilab research for the future is the teleportation of small devices containing electronic sensors and radio transmitters or some very compact form of cassette recorder. Using 'space probes' of this sort might allow physicists to obtain information about what happens to objects when they disappear.

Meanwhile, perhaps the last word should be left to those immaterial minilab jokers. The following verse is one of several that have appeared in the basement at Rolla. This specimen was typed, apparently paranormally, on a typewriter deliberately supplied with paper and left outside the minilab, but similar offerings have been produced within it. It is certainly a fitting tribute to the pioneer of minilab research:

A clever man, W.E. Cox,
Made a really remarkable box;
In it, we, with PK,
In the usual way,
Wrote, spite of bands, seals and locks!

Teleportation, PK and metal bending: everyday happenings? See page 1306

Research and experiment in parapsychology is thriving behind the Iron Curtain – and has attracted the interest of security and military officials. GUY LYON PLAYFAIR reports on these alarming developments

IN 1957, ONLY THREE ARTICLES appeared on the subject of parapsychology in the entire Soviet press, and they were all hostile. Ten years later, the total had risen to 152, and less than 10 per cent were negative or even critical. Psychic matters had become respectable and, as a steady stream of Western journalists soon discovered, there was plenty to write about. All over the Soviet Union, it seemed, talented subjects were demonstrating their paranormal abilities to scientists, who in turn were eager to share their new discoveries with Western colleagues. The Soviets were in fact just as interested in telepathy, psychokinesis, UFOs, paranormal healing, and the rest of the psi spectrum as anybody else.

On the death of Leonid Vasiliev in 1966, a new generation of Soviet researchers, many directly inspired by him, was ready to carry on and expand his work. A young physicist, Viktor Adamenko, was studying the psychokinetic talent of his wife Alla Vingradova. Dr G.A. Sergeyev, a mathematician and neurophysiologist, was deeply involved in research into Man's interactions – both normal and paranormal – with his environment. Biochemist Yuri Kamensky had shown himself to be an unusually successful transmitter of telepathy, and his long-distance experiments

Bottom: the might of Soviet arms. But is the real threat from the East a sinister form of telepathy – mind control?

Below: Dr Genady Sergeyev, a mathematician and neurophysiologist, with his invention, a 'bioenergy measuring device'



with actor Karl Nikolayev fully supported earlier work by Vasiliev. At the Kazakh State University in Alma-Ata, biophysicist Dr V.M. Inyushin was evolving his theory of the human 'bioplasma body' and developing the high-frequency photographic technique rediscovered and popularised by Semyon and Valentina Kirlian (see page 50).

Their star performers

The scientists had plenty of star performers to work with. Nina Kulagina (see page 376) was willing to demonstrate her PK abilities to order, whether to scientists in laboratories or to Western visitors in hotel rooms. Rosa Kuleshova was repeatedly proving her ability to read with her fingertips. Boris Yermolayev was satisfying astonished observers, including the eminent psychologist Dr Venyamin Pushkin, that he could levitate objects and even people. A young Azerbaijani named Tofik Dadashev was all set to carry on the stage tradition set by Wolf Messing (see page 1237), and bring publicly demonstrated telepathy into almost every city in the country.

Behind all this excitement, the scientists were hard at work on theoretical aspects of psi, led by Dr Ippolit Kogan, head of the newly formed Bioinformation Section of a Moscow technical institute. And although parapsychology had never been recognised as a scientific discipline in its own right, a young biologist named Eduard Naumov was devoting himself to it full-time, determined to increase and improve East-West relations

This is Moscow calling



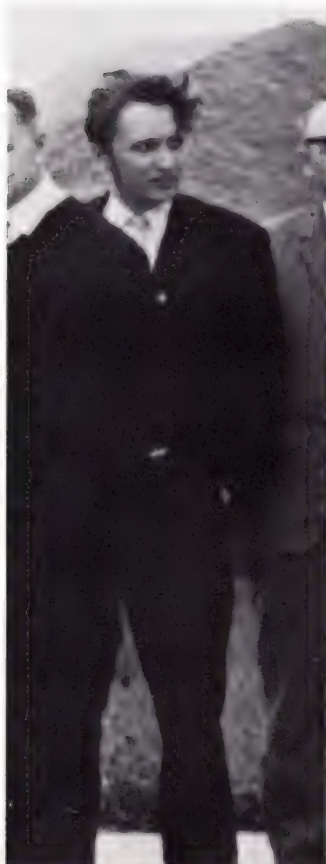


Bottom left: Dr Viktor Inyushin, a biophysicist at Kazakh State University. His research into Kirlian photography is officially approved by the state

Below right: Soviet actor Karl Nikolayev, the subject of many successful experiments into long-distance telepathy

Viktor Adamenko (above) and Alla Vingradova (right) demonstrate their PK ability for American authors Henry Gris and William Dick during a visit to the USSR.

Adamenko is holding a small electric light bulb that spontaneously lit up when placed next to an object that had been acted upon by his wife's psychokinetic abilities. Vingradova moves a metal cigar tube by passing her hand over it. It seems unlikely that this represents the most impressive PK the Soviets can muster



in his chosen field of research.

Elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the psychic scene looked equally promising, especially in Czechoslovakia, where Dr Milan Ryzl was showing that paranormal skills could be aroused by training and the use of hypnosis. Working over a three-year period with a single subject, Pavel Stepanek, he achieved significantly positive results nine times out of ten in card-guessing experiments, several of which were witnessed by Western visitors. He had, he claimed, published details of the first demonstration of repeatable telepathy under laboratory conditions. 'The subject,' he said, 'evidently and repeatedly manifested the faculty of extra-sensory perception.'

Also in Czechoslovakia, engineer-inventor Robert Pavlita aroused considerable interest with his 'psychotronic generators' – small metal objects with which, he claimed, he was able to store 'biological energy'.

Meanwhile, Bulgaria had become the first country in the world to boast a state-run psychic, a blind woman named Vanga Dimitrova from the small southern town of Petrich. Any visitor could walk into the Sofia office of Balkantourist, the state travel agency, and book a sitting with her. He would then drive to Petrich, spend the night in the state hotel built especially for

Dimitrova's clients and sleep with a sugar lump under his pillow. The next day he would visit Dimitrova and, when he reached the head of the queue, she would take the lump from him, press it to her forehead, and immediately reel off a flood of information about his past, present and future. Bulgaria could also boast another world first: its official parapsychology institute in the centre of Sofia, headed by Georgi Lozanov, a medical doctor who, like thousands of other Bulgarians, had received accurate personal information from Dimitrova. He was later to become famous for his method of rapid learning through 'suggestology'.

East-West dialogue

In the 1960s Eastern Europe was indeed the centre of parapsychology. But it was not to last. In 1968, Eduard Naumov organised an international conference in Moscow, which was attended by nine Westerners, including journalists Lynn Schroeder and Sheila Ostrander from the USA. Hardly had the meeting begun when *Pravda* came out with a savage attack on parapsychology in general and PK medium Nina Kulagina in particular; delegates were dismissed from the House of Friendship, and word went round that the East-West dialogue between parapsychologists was over.

Matters were made even worse when Schroeder and Ostrander published *Psychic discoveries behind the Iron Curtain* in 1970. This popular book contained an enormous amount of information on developments in



Eastern Europe and the USSR previously unknown to Westerners, and led to a considerable increase of interest in them. It also made it clear that the Soviets were way ahead of the field in most areas of research into the paranormal. But Soviet authorities did not like the book at all. It was, they said, 'overflowing with factual errors and undisguised anti-Soviet thrusts', and they reacted violently to the suggestion that parapsychology was linked to 'defence, psychological warfare, espionage, etc'.

Reliable observers consider, however, that what really angered the authorities was the indiscretion of Naumov, who had revealed a couple of state secrets: one, that the



Left: PK 'superstar' Nina Kulagina moving a matchbox by telekinesis. Later in 1977, although recovering from a near-fatal heart attack, she repeated this feat during a filmed demonstration in Moscow. Her psychokinesis cost her a tremendous physical effort, unlike that of Western psychics such as Uri Geller or the Philip group in Toronto

Soviet military had carried out experiments in animal telepathy between a submarine and the shore, and the other, that a method had been devised to intercept telepathy between humans. Both these reports, if true, could have considerable military significance; conventional communication with a submerged submarine can be extremely difficult, and if telepathy were to become a weapon of war, a means of intercepting it would be of the greatest value.

A trumped-up charge

Although Naumov managed to organise another highly successful international meeting in 1972, he was in serious trouble the following year – allegedly for a financial misdemeanour – and was arrested and sentenced to two years' forced labour in March 1974. Perhaps as a result of vigorous international protest, he was released a year later; however, he was not allowed to resume his work and he disappeared altogether from the parapsychological scene.

In October 1973, the Soviet press published an article that seemed, at last, to define the official attitude towards parapsychology and go some way to explaining the USSR's erratic international relations. The message was clear. Psi phenomena did indeed exist – some of them, anyway – and should be researched, but not by amateurs or 'militant individuals' (a clear reference to Naumov), but by the Soviet Academy of Sciences instead.

Normal international relations were apparently resumed when, largely on the initiatives of two psychologists, Dr Stanley Krippner (USA) and Dr Zdenek Rejda (Czechoslovakia), the first International Conference of Psychotronic Research was held in Prague in 1973 (psychotronics is the Eastern term for parapsychology). More than 400 delegates from 21 countries attended, including a group from the Soviet Academy of Sciences, and several Soviet and Eastern European scientists made important

contributions. 'There is no doubt that we are experiencing the birth of a unique science,' said Krippner of the study of psychotronics, 'one which requires a combination of the physical and behavioural sciences with a new, holistic viewpoint on the organisation of life systems.'

A solid bridge had at last, it seemed, been built. Several Westerners visited the Eastern bloc countries, and formed close friendships with their counterparts there. Further psychotronic congresses were held at two-year intervals, and although there was no Soviet presence in Monaco in 1975 or in Tokyo in 1977, a team of Moscow medical researchers attended the 1979 gathering in Brazil, where Dr Rejda made a firm plea for placing psychotronic research above politics.

One might have thought that Schroeder and Ostrander had closed the door for other

Below: Boris Yermolaev demonstrates the 'passes' he makes while paranormally suspending objects in the air



Western writers, but in 1975 two American reporters from the sensationalist weekly *National Enquirer* were given free access to several Soviet research centres, including some that were off limits even to Soviet journalists. Henry Gris and William Dick were as surprised as anybody else at the privilege they had been granted, and one Soviet scientist speculated that his country's authorities were just as curious about Western advances in parapsychology as Westerners were about theirs. They wanted to find out how advanced they really were, he thought, by studying reactions to what Gris and Dick reported.

Yet, even as they were preparing their book, a bizarre incident took place in June 1977 that seemed to put the clock back to the chilliest period of the cold war of the 1950s. On 11 June, the *Los Angeles Times* correspondent in Moscow, Robert C. Toth, was telephoned by a man named Petukhov and asked to meet him in the street at once. Toth did so, and was handed a document, but before he had time even to glance at it, both men were surrounded by plainclothes police and driven off for lengthy – and presumably



Top: a selection of the various types of psychotronic generator invented by Robert Pavlita (above) in Czechoslovakia. They can, he claims, store biological energy



Left: American journalists Lynn Schroeder (left) and Sheila Ostrander (right) with Soviet parapsychologist Eduard Naumov in Moscow in 1968 during the First International Conference on Parapsychology, which was organised by Naumov. Ostrander and Schroeder published their discoveries in *Psychic discoveries behind the Iron Curtain* in 1970. The book was swiftly denounced by Soviet authorities

very unpleasant – interrogation.

Then a man claiming to be a senior member of the Academy of Sciences promptly appeared, read the document, and announced that it contained an account of recent Soviet discoveries on the physical basis of psi phenomena – something they had sought in vain for half a century – and was a state secret. Toth was soon released, after 13 hours of interrogation by the KGB, and allowed to leave the country.

The incident baffled Western observers as much as it did Toth himself, who had never shown any interest in parapsychology. It was thought at the time that he was merely being warned off any involvement with dissidents, but this is unlikely in view of the fact that he had finished his tour and was due to leave anyway. A more probable explanation is that the whole episode, obviously set up by the authorities, was a clumsy bluff. The Soviets had not solved the psi mystery, but they wanted the West to think they had, and they hoped Toth would report something to this effect to his newspaper.

There was another more alarming theory. In 1973 Brezhnev had made an enigmatic

reference in a speech to a form of warfare 'more terrifying' than even nuclear weaponry, and the need for the USA to agree to a ban on it; he gave the impression that he knew the American leaders would know what he meant. Was this a veiled reference to biochemical (germ) warfare or had the Toth affair been a gentle reminder to the West that the Soviets were now in a position to wage psychic warfare?

After visiting the USSR shortly before he went to live in the United States, Milan Ryzl reported on a paradoxical state of affairs there. Parapsychology, he said, was poorly funded, yet there were signs of considerable interest from security and military authorities in possible uses of it. Practical application had always been a characteristic of all communist research, and once it became possible to make practical use of psi, Dr Ryzl concluded, 'there is no doubt that the Soviet Union will do so'.

Western researchers have repeatedly been urged by their Eastern colleagues to ensure that psychic forces are used for peace and for the benefit of humanity. 'There is something about the way they say this,' says one, 'that makes it clear to me that some people have other ideas.'

Has the Third World War already started – and is the West losing it? See page 1266



Right: Vanga Dimitrova, Bulgaria's famous blind prophetess. She was the world's first known state-financed psychic; sittings with her could be booked through the Bulgarian state travel agency

Sailing by the stars

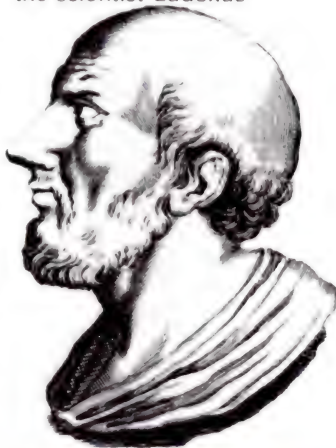
No surviving records tell us which ancient people devised the constellation figures or what their purpose was. The clues must be sought, as ARCHIE ROY explains, by careful analysis of the star pictures themselves

WHY DID THE ANCIENT ASTRONOMERS who made up the constellation figures map out the night sky? There are at least three types of motive that they might have had. They might have wanted to use the constellations to mark off the passing of the year; they might have wanted to put pictures of the gods and goddesses they venerated in an exalted place in the heavens; or they might have wanted to provide reference points for navigation. In fact, the constellation figures can serve all three purposes at once.

When we examine Aratus's poem describing the skies, the *Phaenomena* (see page 1201), we find that there are only a few allusions to agricultural pursuits. But it does contain a large number of nautical references. It could, in fact, be looked on as a poetic manual for seamen. For example, we find Aratus writing in reference to the stars near the celestial North Pole:

Now some stars in numbers, going
divers ways,

The Greek poet Aratus lived at the Macedonian court in the third century BC. His poem *Phaenomena*, dealing with astronomy and weather lore, is based on the work of the scientist Eudoxus



Are ever drawn by heaven and ever
joined;
Yet never doth the axis change the
least,
Aye fixed e'en as it is; and has in midst
The earth in equipoise, and carries
round the sky.
This axis forms on either side a pole;
The one we see not but the opposite
Is high o'er ocean in the north; two
Bears
Called Wains move round it, either in
her place. . . .
And *Trail-of-light* the one men call by
name,
The other *Twister*. By it on the deep
Achaians gather where to sail their
ships,
Phoinikians to her fellow trust at sea.
Twister is clear and easy to perceive,
Shining with ample light when night
begins;
Though small the other, 'tis for sailors
better,
For in a smaller orbit all revolves:
By it Sidonians make the straightest
course.

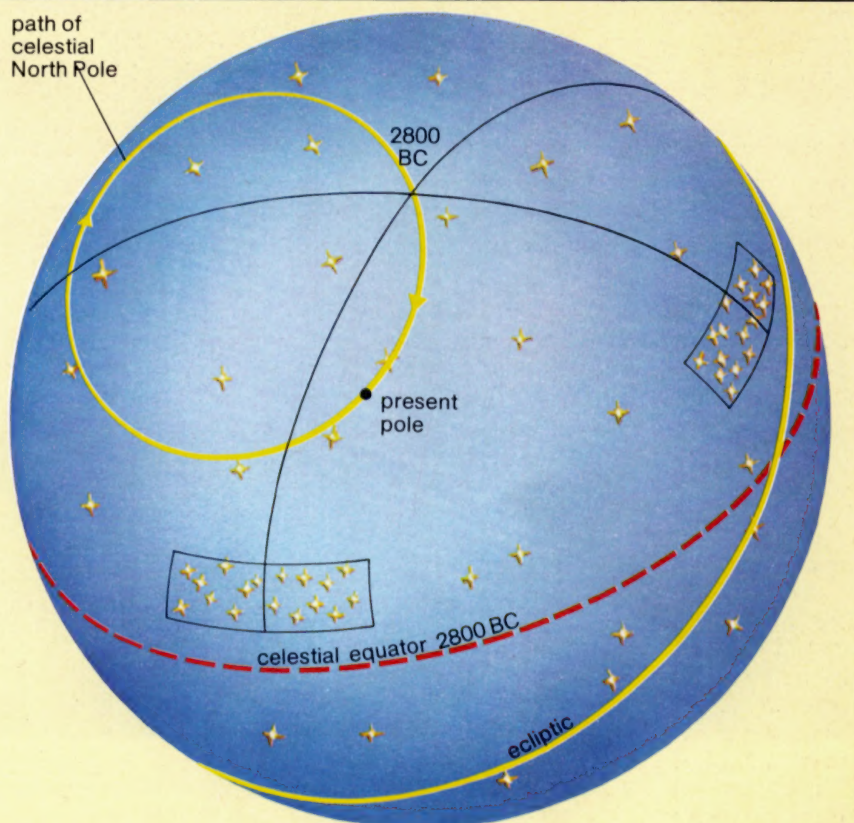
This particular passage is so packed with information that it is worth spending some



Constellations of the northern hemisphere, drawn by a Dutch astronomer about 1700. The Pole Star, at the tip of the Little Bear's tail, is just below centre, while the ecliptic lies around the edge. The non-zodiacal constellations seem to lie in rings roughly centred on the position of the pole about 2500 BC (in the Dragon, near the head of the Little Bear). In the upper corners, proposed Christian constellations are shown. (Each diagram has north at the top.) The Great Bear has been replaced by St Peter's fishing boat, while the Ship has become the Ark. Revised constellations such as these have never displaced the ancient ones

Pointing to the pole

Certain constellations have elongated shapes and seem to have been positioned east-west in the sky – that is, parallel to the celestial equator of that time, which was different from the modern one. The astronomer Michael Ovenden used this to deduce a probable date for the origin of the constellations. He drew a line at right angles to the long axis of each such constellation shape; the circular path traced out over the past 26,000 years by the celestial North Pole was intersected in two places by each such line. But there was only one position at which all such lines roughly intersected: the position of the pole about 2800 BC (with an uncertainty of 300 years each way). This may be when the constellations were devised. Each elongated constellation would indicate to seamen the direction of the pole (and hence of the direction of north). And while it was rising or setting (a period of several hours) it would indicate a fixed direction on the horizon, which would be part of the navigator's inherited astronomical lore.



time on it. Written in the third century BC, it shows a sophisticated degree of astronomical knowledge in its easy acceptance of the Earth poised in space, while the heavens revolve about two poles, one of which is not visible. Believing as we do that the *Phaenomena* enshrines knowledge from a much earlier epoch, it is strong evidence that the constellation makers themselves had achieved this insight into the nature of the world by about 2500 BC.

The statement regarding the confidence of the Phoenicians (Phoenicians) in the Little Bear (Trail-of-light) during their voyages is a reference to the tradition that these great seafarers used the constellation as a navigational aid. From about 1500 BC, the Little Bear was sufficiently close to the celestial North Pole to be used as an indication of the northern direction. (Today it is even closer: one of its stars, Polaris, lies almost exactly at the pole.)

Aratus's poem is preoccupied with the portents, astronomical and otherwise, of storms at sea. At one point he describes the significance of the southern constellation called the Altar:

Yet as regards that Altar, ancient Night,
In pity for man's woes, placed it a
mighty sign
Of storm at sea. For breaking ships she
hates;
And other signs elsewhere she lets be
seen. . . .
For often in the south this Sign doth
Night

A trading ship depicted in a Phoenician relief of the first or second century BC, found in the city of Tyre. Phoenicia occupied an area roughly corresponding to modern Lebanon. Its people were renowned merchants and were reputed to be the first to steer their ships by Polaris, the Pole Star



Herself provide, respecting sailors'
woes. . . .

And if the portents shown by her they
mark,
And quickly make all gearing trim and
taut,

Forthwith their toil is less.

Such passages strongly support the conclusion that the constellation system was designed primarily as a navigational aid.

A system of constellations placed round the ecliptic to make it easy to keep track of the Sun throughout the year would be useful for indicating the months. But the constellations, especially those constellations off the ecliptic, seem to be orientated and positioned not with respect to the ecliptic but with respect to the equator – but the equator of 2500 BC. Would such a system be of use to a seaman? It would indeed. If a number of constellations lie at the same distance from the equator, each will rise and set at the same pair of points, though at different times of night. For the navigator with a good memory, the direction in which he sails or wants to sail is then indicated throughout the night by his knowledge of the rising and setting points on the horizon of the various stellar groups.

The navigator people and the constellation makers could have been the same people or two different peoples. The navigators could have lived at a later era than the constellation makers, even if they were of the same race. Thus over many centuries the latter had observed the heavens, projecting



on the random patterns of the stars the figures of their people's legendary heroes and heroines, monsters and more familiar animals as a useful method of memorising the heavenly panorama. The stars of the zodiac would probably have been the earliest to be arranged in this way, for they were constantly being traversed by the Sun, Moon and planets, which were under the jurisdiction of the gods. But at some specific time the whole sphere of the heavens, apart from the contemporary zone of avoidance about the celestial South Pole, was deliberately organised for navigational purposes.

Seamen added all the associated weather lore to provide a body of useful navigational instructions that would enable them to voyage safely out of sight of land. This body of astronomical and meteorological knowledge would be taught to later generations.

Jealously guarded lore

We know of seafaring peoples in more recent times who preserved an oral tradition of astronomical knowledge. In the Pacific, the Polynesian and Micronesian peoples undertook long voyages out of sight of land. Navigators existed who utilised the Sun and stars and who belonged to élite groups of families, jealously guarding their astronomical lore, passing such secrets down from generation to generation by word of mouth.

It is on record that Eudoxus visited Egypt, where he studied astronomy and other branches of learning. When he returned to Athens he introduced the system of knowledge he had learned from the Egyptian priests. Was this where he obtained the famous star globe that became known as the Sphere of Eudoxus? Was it a very ancient

If the constellations were laid out to indicate significant positions and directions in the sky, it is natural to suppose that the contemporary celestial equator would be marked. The biblical scholar Walter Maunder suggested that Hydra, the Watersnake, played this role. About 2800 BC the celestial equator lay along Hydra's back, on which stood the Cup and the Crow. The ecliptic, which is fixed in relation to the stars, was marked out by the constellations of the zodiac. On the other side of the sky, the Serpent lay along the celestial equator, its body bending towards the celestial North Pole at an important point, the autumn equinox

navigational star globe, which, after countless voyages, had ended up in the priestly archives of Egypt? The historian A.D.C. Crommelin, without giving any authority for his statement, says that Eudoxus 'brought a celestial globe from Egypt and wrote a description of the figures upon it'. In his poem, Aratus acknowledges the unknown antiquity of the constellation makers:

Some man of yore
A nomenclature thought of and
devised,

And forms sufficient found.

(By which Aratus meant forms for the star patterns.)

We can now understand why the body of astronomical information reached Eudoxus still 'frozen' at the epoch of 2300 BC. It had to be so if it was presented on a globe of that vintage. It is still perplexing why the priests did not give Eudoxus a more recent, updated model used by seafarers. Was it because they had none in their archives? Had something happened some time between 2300 BC and the date of Eudoxus's visit, something that put the nautical astronomers out of business, that made such star globes a discontinued line, because there was no one around in the navigators' homeland to carry out the observations required to correct the system? According to one account, another Greek seeker after knowledge in Egypt, namely Solon, was also told a story by the priests – a story that may well explain why. We will return to it later.

For it is time now to list the candidates for the title of constellation makers.

Which ancient people mapped the sky by means of the constellations? See page 1274

Post script

Your letters to
THE UNEXPLAINED

Dear Sir,

As one who has taken *The Unexplained* since the first number, I am surprised that in the various articles on alchemy no mention has been made of something that has always seemed to me to be fundamental.

When I was at school in the '30s, we were taught in science lessons that the notion of the transmutation of metals and the Philosopher's Stone arose from one simple discovery – that if a piece of iron or steel is rubbed with a damp copper sulphate crystal, copper is deposited on the surface of the metal.

The ancients, knowing nothing of compounds, and thus having no reason to associate a blue 'stone' with a metal, thought that the crystal in some mysterious way converted the surface of the iron to copper. It seemed reasonable that if such transmutation was possible, the production of precious metals from base ones could perhaps be achieved, if only one could find the right 'stone'.

This always seemed to me a logical explanation, and takes the mystery out of an otherwise inexplicable quest.

Yours faithfully,

H. Foote

Swindon, Wiltshire

Mr Foote's suggestion is ingenious and attractive. In fact, the alchemists made many observations that misled them into thinking they had made gold; but the Philosopher's Stone of legend was always yellow, amber or reddish, never blue, which suggests that copper sulphate did not play the role suggested by Mr Foote. In any event, the 'mystery' behind the quest remains, for the search was a mystical and religious one as much as a scientific one.

Dear Sir,

The sighting described in UFO Casebook, Issue 45, was similar to one I made about five years ago.

Opposite our house there is a field stretching for about 500 feet [150 metres], where three sets of four-storey flats are situated. One night, at about 7 p.m., my brother and I had just finished watching a TV programme when I just rose from my chair and walked outside. It was December and so it should have been pretty cold, but I didn't feel cold. I had gone out in my slippers and without putting on a coat. I walked along the front of the house and stopped at a dividing fence and turned left to face the field where, passing low over the flats, was an object rather like a cottage loaf, with the lower half being red and the top being white and having the appearance of rotating. This lasted for about 30 seconds, throughout which I was totally rooted to the spot. The object passed behind some trees and immediately I went back inside and sat down as if nothing had happened.

Later, I thought about my sighting and came to the conclusion that the object was not of any conventional type and was certainly too big to be aircraft landing lights. I also found it strange that no-one else followed me – just as in the Felixstowe incident described in your article.

Since then I have been interested in UFOs, and have also seen another UFO in the same place.

Yours faithfully,

S. Copestake

Wirral, Merseyside

Dear Sir,

I am writing to tell you of a very frightening experience that happened to me in November 1979. I was working for a contract cleaning company in a large department store. I used to vacuum-clean the perfumery department and it was there that I had my experience. I had reached one corner in a bay about 15 feet by 8 feet [5 metres by 2½ metres] in size. I felt tired and, as it was early – only 6.30 – I decided to have a rest. I switched off my vacuum cleaner and sat down on the floor. In the absolute silence and stillness of the deserted store I fell into a semi-trance, my eyes becoming heavy. I don't know how long I sat there, but eventually I looked up and behind the far counter stood an elderly-looking woman in what I presumed to be a white half-sleeved dress. At first I was startled, and then embarrassed at being caught sitting down on the job. I was not frightened at first, as it was quite usual for some of the store's staff to lag behind. She was looking down at the counter at first, and then she slowly looked up at me. It was then that, to my horror, I realised I could see the main staircase behind her, through her body.

I didn't wait to see her face. I ran to the floor above, babbling about ghosts. I was eventually calmed down – they didn't want their staff frightened. I refused to complete the floor and so I was exchanged with another cleaner.

This was on Thursday night. On Friday I remained on the other floor, and on Saturday returned to the ground floor perfumery. I eventually reached the same spot and I was worried, to say the least. I had my back to the spot where I had seen the figure when I was suddenly gripped with an overwhelming feeling of someone's hatred. I was shaking with fear as I turned round, almost knowing what I would see. She was standing in the same place. She looked slowly up at me, and her eyes seemed to be black arches in her face.

For some unexplainable reason I took a few steps towards her and shouted, in a sobbing voice, 'Who are you? What do you want?' The figure raised its right arm until it was horizontal, pointed at me, and then began to move towards me. I screamed at the top of my voice, 'No!'

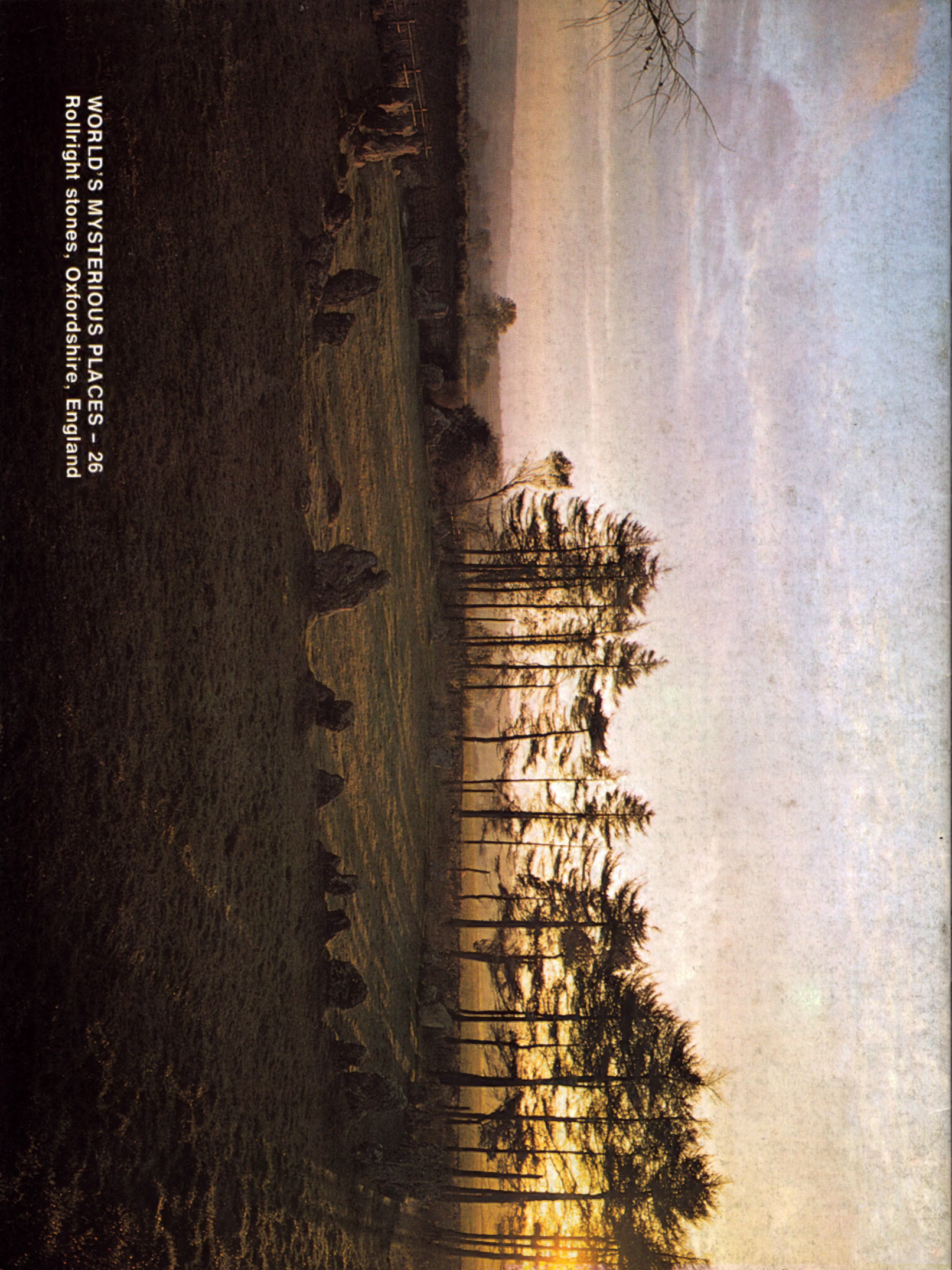
Then the figure disappeared and at the same moment several of the mirror tiles on the wall beside me flew out and struck me. I screamed and ran from the floor, meeting two of my workmates coming down the stairs. I'm not ashamed to say I collapsed in a heap on the floor, in hysterical tears. When I managed to get out my story, it was met with disbelief at first. But the mirror tiles were still on the floor. (Ten gaps where tiles were missing were counted.) I have never been so frightened in my life. I was moved from that floor, but a couple of days later I resigned.

I have no explanation for the incident, but when in the local library a few days later, I noticed a picture of our High Street, taken in the early 1950s. It showed a church standing where the store is now. I did not know of this before the incident and I'm not sure whether there is a connection. But I know I'll never go back there again.

Yours faithfully,

Philip Tennant

Sutton



WORLD'S MYSTERIOUS PLACES - 26
Rollright stones, Oxfordshire, England